Samoa 5W0AF DXpedition

Choosing Samoa as the destination for this DXpedition was motivated by two factors. The first was that the only station that had been active from the island for years, Atsu **5W1SA**, had largely abandoned SSB operation and focused almost exclusively on digital modes. The second reason was my lengthy recovery following major heart surgery. I was somewhat reluctant to travel to remote locations where access to medical assistance could be limited if needed. So, when planning a Pacific trip in the spring of 2026, I chose Samoa, a place I had already visited twice while traveling to and from Tokelau. I also personally knew the manager of the site where I intended to install my antennas and rent a cottage. Another advantage was the availability of fast internet access, which would allow me to upload logs frequently. My cousin, who is not a radio amateur, also joined the expedition, making it much easier to transport nearly 50 kg of equipment.



Unfortunately, the outbreak of war in the Middle East in the spring rendered my previously purchased Qatar Airways tickets unusable. As a result, I postponed the expedition until the fall, which forced me to change my itinerary. I eventually traveled via Turkey, Hong Kong, and New Zealand, making for a very long and exhausting journey. Fortunately, all of my equipment arrived intact, and the day after landing in Samoa, after setting up a GP-7 multiband vertical dipole manufactured by **SP7GXP** (only 7 kg in its lightweight version!), I was already on the air.



Unfortunately, after just two days, my favorite amplifier, which had served me flawlessly on numerous DXpeditions, failed. Being an electronics engineer and carrying plenty of spare parts and the proper tools, I spent considerable time trying to locate the fault, but without success. The culprit eventually turned out to be one of the five cascaded DC-DC converters in the high-voltage power supply. There was simply no way to repair it under field conditions.

Operating QRP proved to be a disaster. Instead of the 700 QSOs per day I had expected, I was making only a few dozen. Moving the antenna closer to the ocean helped somewhat, but Europe still struggled to copy my signal. Throughout the expedition I also had to contend with local noise that persisted all night, most likely generated by LED lighting around the property. Unfortunately, there was nothing I could do about it.

After the amplifier failure, I began trying to contact Atsu, whom I knew personally from previous visits to the island. Fortunately, the licensing

authority helped me get in touch with him. After an unsuccessful attempt to put a spare amplifier he had available into service, Atsu generously offered to lend me his primary amplifier as soon as he had finished participating in an RTTY contest. Thanks to his kindness, after several frustrating days of QRP operation, I was once again able to run full power at 500 watts.



Propagation conditions were highly variable. Initially they were very poor, with the A-index above 20, and 40 meters was virtually the only reliably open band. Conditions then improved somewhat, although the bands remained extremely unpredictable. On 12 meters, where online demand was particularly high, openings to Europe were frustratingly short. On the other hand, I was pleasantly surprised to discover long and productive late-morning openings on 10 meters, during which I was called mainly by North American stations for several hours at a time. None of the propagation prediction tools I used had forecast these openings. Later, conditions deteriorated again. Even stations from usually reliable Japan became difficult to work, European openings became much shorter, and noise levels on 20 meters occasionally reached S6.

The biggest disappointment was undoubtedly 80 meters. During the final week of the expedition I erected a Delta Loop, hoping to give more stations a chance on that band. However, the noise level remained between S7 and S9 around the clock. Installing a dedicated receiving antenna was simply not possible, and despite all efforts I was almost

inaudible in Europe, resulting in only a single QSO there. I managed just a handful of contacts overall, despite spending every sunrise and sunset calling CQ.



Looking at the expedition as a whole, I had originally hoped to make around 10,000 SSB QSOs. In reality, 5,000 proved to be a much more achievable target, and one that I came very close to reaching. From the beginning, the expedition's OQRS system was activated by QSL manager **Marek SP7DQR**, while the expedition website was administered by its creator, **Tom SP5UAF** who kindly designed the logo shown below.



See you again in the air, 73 de Jacek SP5EAQ